

Sketch

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Article 1

The Interview

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Abstract

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“I JUST don’t see how I can *possibly* go to that interview, Julie,” Anne forced the words from her tight, aching throat.

Julie’s forehead wrinkled like a washboard. “Oh, Annie, don’t worry. You’ll do a fine job. You always do. Just because this is a Homecoming Central Committee position —.” She stretched out across the bed, stomach down, and thumped a sofa pillow.

“Oh, it’s not so much the interview. It’s that editorial, by Wayne Thomas.”

“He’s chairman of the Activities Investigation Committee for Student Senate, isn’t he?”

“Yeah. And he says things like this.” She leaned over her cluttered desk and began to read from an open *Daily*. “‘Committee chairman from time to time have released the names of their committee members to the ‘*Daily*’ and then begged the story be held up until interviews can be scheduled.’ And this — ‘Committee chairmen help applicants prepare their interviews so the applicants will be sure of the position.’”

“Do you think stuff like that really goes on on campus, Annie?”

“I — I — well — ” Anne shrugged. She stood nibbling her thumb nail and staring straight ahead. She didn’t like to think that people weren’t quite honest, but Hank had — well — she’d never have gotten her interview ready if Hank hadn’t helped her.

“But, Julie, what if they’re writing about Hank?”

“About Hank!” That brought the lazy roommate bolt upright. “Hank Schaller? Certainly not! Hank’s *above* that sort of thing.” She shook her finger like a scolding

grandmother. "You've always worked for him. You know he's honest. Wayne Thomas wouldn't *dare* write about Hank."

"But, Julie, if I get the job, won't kids say it's because I'm pinned to him?" Anne's eyes were troubled green pools.

"It looks like Hank Schaller knows a good Decorations Chairman when he sees one."

"But, Julie, I've *never* worked with decorations."

Julie shrugged. "You'll make a good chairman. You always do. Hank's got good judgment, Annie. He sees people's possibilities and puts them in positions where they can contribute the most." She paused. Anne stared straight ahead, nibbling.

"Hank's headed straight for Senior Honors, and nobody but campus leaders make *that!* Hank's doing the college a real service, Annie."

"I hope you're right, Julie." Service, she thought, to whom? To Hank it's just another step on the road to glory.

"Of course I am. Now do get dressed, Annie. You'll be late for the interview."

Anne reached automatically for the plaid skirt hanging on the back of the door. She pulled it over her blonde hair and zipped it up the back. Halfway the zipper caught. She yanked savagely and it slid to the top.

Julie studied her roommate carefully. "This isn't at all like you, Annie," she observed. "You're the last one to find fault with anyone. You *do* believe in Hank, don't you?"

"I — I think so, Julie."

"Remember what you said the night he pinned you? About how good and honest he is. And how modest he is?"

Anne nodded. She remembered something else Hank had told her, more recently: "I think I'm a leader, Annie. I'm going to make Senior Honors. I'm not going to let anyone or anything stop me."

Anne's cold hands shook as she pulled a beige sweater out of her drawer. Stop it, she told herself. It can't possibly be *that* bad.

She studied the beige sweater against her face. It made her skin look pale. She put the sweater back and took out a dark green one. "Look o.k., Julie?"

Julie cocked her head slowly like an intelligent puppy. "Mmmm-hmmm!" She smiled slowly. "Oh, Annie, you *do* look nice! They'll give you the job on looks alone! Aren't you excited?"

"Yeah."

"Anne, I think it's great!" Julie's cheeks flushed. "Just think. Anne Brandenburg, Decorations Chairman and member of Homecoming Central Committee." She beamed.

Anne tried to make her shaky hand draw a straight line of lipstick.

"Anne —"

"Mmmm-hmmm."

"You're not scared, are you? About this interview, I mean."

Anne didn't answer.

"Oh, Annie, please don't be. It's just an ordinary interview, like a million others you've had."

"Not quite, Julie."

"Almost."

"Almost doesn't count."

"But, Annie, you've interviewed for Hank Schaller before — lots of times — Junior-Senior Prom Publicity, Homecoming Publicity last year, Winter Carnival. You're pinned to him, remember?"

"That just makes it harder, Julie."

"Have you thought of what you'll say in your interview?"

"Oh — uh — the usual thing, I guess — how I'd organize the committee, how we'd get residences to submit themes for decorations." She shrugged. "I don't know." Deep down she did know. Hank had told her just what to say to the interviewing committee. After all, he was General Chairman of Homecoming and he'd be asking most of the questions.

"But don't you have to know pretty well what you're going to say? Homecoming's the biggest thing this campus does!"

"Yeah."

"Who was it who had an eighteen-page outline when he applied for General Chairman *and* copies for every member of the interviewing committee?"

"Mike Shannon. He didn't get it. He didn't know as

many of the interviewing committee as Hank did."

"I think Hank Schaller's better. Aren't you glad you got pinned to him last week-end? He's just the natural General Chairman type. Don't you think so?"

"Yeah." Anne smiled weakly. Silly question! She'd always believed in Hank Schaller, ever since she'd gotten on his committee for Junior-Senior Prom Publicity her freshman year. All the way along she'd seen Hank handle people. He seemed to have a spell over them. He could loaf around a publicity office all afternoon and never lift a finger, just tell kids what to do. Recently she'd had a funny, nagging feeling that it wasn't quite right. But no one ever seemed to mind. Whatever they did for Hank Schaller, they did for his abundant appreciation.

Since she'd been pinned to him though — well — he slipped out once in a while with things that didn't fit in with the honest and upright character. They were little things — like telling her who'd be on the Homecoming Central Committee even before he'd scheduled interviews and like helping her so hard with hers. And last Friday night she'd sat home because he was helping Buz Flynn prepare his publicity interview. Hank wanted Buz for Publicity.

Well, Buz would be a good Publicity Chairman, she had to admit that. He'd always worked hard on Hank's other committees, jumping and running to do anything Hank asked.

Anne pulled on a light jacket and started out the door mechanically.

"Now do a bang-up job on that interview, Annie," she heard her roommate say.

"Thanks." Anne smiled weakly. "Bye, Julie."

Anne went downstairs, past the mail boxes, and shut the side door behind her quietly. She had a weight in the bottom of her stomach. Why'd she apply for Decorations Chairman anyway? She didn't want the job. And all the time she knew it was because Hank had asked her to and because she was under his spell, along with everyone else.

A few weeks ago in the library he'd sat down beside her and very quietly said, "Annie, I'm applying for General Chairman of Homecoming."

"Oh, Hank, I'm glad. I hope you get it."

"Well, if I do, I want you to apply for Decorations Chairman."

She felt an inward glow from his compliment. Then it cooled.

"But, Hank, I've never done decorations!"

"That's all right," he answered calmly. "You can do it. You're a top-notch worker and I want you on my committee. The job's yours, if you want it, Annie. You'll apply, won't you?"

She hesitated. She rubbed her chilly hands against each other. Finally she had to look at him. He was looking at her, straight and hard. "Yes, Hank, I'll apply."

"Good for you, Annie. I knew I could count on you." He stood up. "And, Annie, keep it kind of hush, hush." He motioned with his hand. "You know."

"Sure, Hank." She smiled blankly, fighting the queezy feeling that rose in her stomach.

But *why*, she thought, *why* hadn't he asked her to do publicity? Publicity she understood. She had worked publicity, knew the angles, the techniques, the "ins". But Hank had wanted Buz Flynn to do publicity. "Publicity's a man's job, Annie."

She sighed. It was a warm evening. The buds above her were swelling, almost ready to pop. It was the kind of evening she wished she and Hank were walking hand in hand through the hazy freshness. She inhaled deeply, but she couldn't get that fresh feeling inside her. The weight sat there, heavy and solid, in her stomach. She could see the lights of the Union Building ahead of her and automatically her steps dragged a little. She had her committee organization well in mind. She'd have an assistant chairman, a secretary and a business manager. Then judges chairman, residence decorations chairman. She mentally counted them on her fingers. Campus decorations chairman. And remember to bring out the new idea Hank had given — the supply chairman who would take orders for materials from the residences, buy the materials wholesale, and then sell them again to the residences cheaper than the local merchants. She'd have to have someone really good in the job!

She knew *nothing* about materials. The other ideas — she hoped she'd remember them in the interview.

In the warm darkness the shadowy form of the Union Building loomed ahead of her. One of those squares of light was the Homecoming Interviewing Committee. Her heart pounded as she pushed open the heavy door. What if something doesn't go right, she thought. And then the light and laughter flooded out, engulfing her.

Anne started through the Commons. She tried to keep her eyes ahead and at the same time see if there was anyone she should recognize. Three years — and she hadn't mastered the casual way to go through the Commons yet! Hank did it so easily!

"Hi, Annie." Mike Shannon approached with two steaming coffee cups and a Green River balanced expertly.

"Hi, Mike."

"Hear you're interviewing for Decorations Chairman tonight."

"Mmmm-hmmm."

"Hope you do better than I did! Go to it, Annie."

"Thanks, Mike." He sauntered over to his usual table. Since he lost the Homecoming Chairmanship, he'd practically had a "Reserved" sign on that table.

Anne noticed Jan Harding, her freshman roommate, sitting, with her pinmate, Bob. It didn't seem as if she ever got to see Jan anymore. Oh, they passed on campus — hurried, precious minutes between classes. But the old talks, the long evenings — they never managed to get them in anymore.

"Come on, Annie, join us," Bob called across the empty tables. Anne glanced at her watch. She sat down in the chair Bob offered.

"I can only stay a minute."

"Glad to have you while you can," Jan grinned. "You're so darn busy."

Anne leaned back. She always had such a warm, comfortable feeling when she was with Jan.

"Not too busy to get pinned, though. Hank Schaller, isn't it?" Bob asked.

"Mmmm-hmmm. Oh — ah — what brings you two to the Union?"

"We're just stopping for a cuppa coffee. Jan just got out of an interview."

"Oh. For what?"

"Decorations Chairman for Homecoming."

Anne froze. Then, quickly, "W-w-well, how'd it go?"

"Oh, all right. Hank Schaller didn't seem too interested. I've never worked for him, but I'd certainly like to. He's something to work for, I hear. Right, Annie?"

Anne colored. "Right."

"Well, I told him everything I could — organization, policies, new ideas — everything. I had the suggestions from last year's committee. I thought it was a pretty good interview myself."

"You've sure had the experience," Bob put in proudly. "Assistant Chairman last year; secretary before that. You couldn't help getting it, Jan."

"Well, I've wanted it for three years."

"Sure, you'll get it," Bob insisted. "Hank Schaller knows a good Decorations Chairman when he sees one."

"Well, I guess you can't tell any more. You've seen Wayne Thomas's editorial, haven't you, Annie?"

"Briefly."

"Didn't you like it? It's like a shot in the arm to activities." Bob was a pre-med student. "Wayne even cited cases where the chairman helped an applicant prepare his interview. That's pretty dirty."

"I wish I'd had some help on mine," Jan laughed. Then she looked at Anne. "I didn't mean that the way it sounded. I wouldn't even have applied if I hadn't thought Hank Schaller's above that. I've spent the last two weeks on my interview. I'm sure I haven't wasted all that time."

Anne looked at her watch uneasily. "I-I've got to go." She rose. "Thanks for the hospitality."

"Wish you could stay longer," Bob added rising. "Come on, Jan. We'd better go too. Hank said he'd call you yet tonight, didn't he?"

As Anne hurried out of the Commons, doubt crossed her mind. But surely not Hank, she tried to reassure herself. Everyone said he was too honest for *that*.

She scurried up the stairs to second floor. Number 224.

That's where Hank had told her to go. The door was shut; she'd have a few minutes to collect her thoughts.

She took a limp paper from her pocket, then stuffed it back again. She didn't need that outline! She'd been over it so often it was practically ingrained in her. She nibbled at her thumb nail and hoped she'd remember the Materials Purchasing Service. Hank had promised to lead right into it. Golly! Why'd she apply for this anyway? She'd be so much more at home in Publicity! And then she remembered why, and she ran over her answers again to be sure.

She swung around as the door clicked, her hand dropped to her side, Hank, tall and casual leaned out. "Annie?" he asked quietly.

"Yes, Hank?"

"Ready?"

"I-I think so." She looked at him to reassure herself.

"Don't worry, Annie." He squeezed her shoulder. "Everything's going to be all right."

She walked through the door and faced a table and the two boys standing behind it. She recognized Buz Flynn and smiled. "Hi, Buz."

"Hi, Annie."

"Annie, do you know Wayne Thomas? Wayne, Anne Brandenburg."

"Hello, Anne."

Wayne Thomas! The one who'd written that editorial! What was he here for anyway? She felt Hank looking at her. "He-hello, Wayne."

The cloud of doubt returned. It lurked above her. She wished frantically that Hank had kept all his old ideas. She was glad to sit down in the chair Hank offered.

"You're applying for Decorations Chairman of Homecoming, aren't you, Annie?" Hank always began interviews that way.

"Yes, I am."

"What do you propose doing with the job? That is, how would you organize your committee?"

"Oh, ah—" Her eyes searched the ceiling for the answers. She slid one clammy hand over the other. "Assistant chairman — secretary — ah — business manager — and — then I'd have — ah — judges chairman and residences decoration

chairman — campus decorations chairman and — ah — any other I thought I'd need."

"Such as —"

"Well, I'd thought some of a chairman in charge of — ah — materials." She tried to talk to Wayne Thomas and Buz without looking at Hank. It was hard. Hank sat in the middle. "He'd take the orders for decorations materials — from — ah — residences and — order the materials from — manufacturers in big — ah — large quantities and sell — them to the residences — cheaper than the local stores."

Hank was nodding. She wished he'd take the lead, but he didn't. She went on. "We could supply materials — ah — cheaper than local stores and — ah — we'd be able to stock more — what the residences want because they'd — ah — order instead of having to make do with what they can get."

"Wouldn't it be necessary to get decorations themes in earlier than usual?" Wayne Thomas asked.

She looked at Hank. "I suppose so," she answered finally. "I think we'd get supplies in time though."

"What about points to judge decorations on?" Hank asked.

Hank! What did you say about this?

"Oh, ah — pretty much the same as last year. Ah — I'd like to add points for working in the 'Welcome Alums' angle." Thank goodness she'd remembered that! "Homecoming is for the alums, you know."

"That's good," Buzz murmured. He looked as though he'd used the "Welcome Alums" angle to get the Publicity Chairmanship.

"Do you have any questions about the job?"

Whew! It's almost over when he says that. "No, Hank, I haven't."

"I'd like to ask something." She jumped at Wayne Thomase's voice. "Anne, why did you apply for Decorations? I see you've always worked on Publicity."

Publicity's a man's job, Annie.

"Well — ah — I-I'd like to try something different for a change."

She looked automatically to Hank. Please say something, Hank. Please. I can't just say, "Hank asked me to." Please, Hank, anything!

"I think we've about covered everything, Annie," Hank said.

Awkwardly she rose and went toward the door that Hank held open for her.

"Thanks so much for coming, Annie. We'll be calling you later this evening."

She didn't dare look up at him. I want to get out of here — she could think of nothing else.

Through a fog she heard Wayne Thomas say, "Nice to meet you, Anne."

Oh, yes. "N-nice to meet you, Wayne. Bye, Buz."

And then she had to look at Hank because there was no place else to look. And when she looked, Hank winked at her. She'd known he would. "Be seein' you, Annie."

"Bye, Hank."

The door closed. She stood alone in the long corridor of doors. Her hands felt clammy and wet. She was limp and hot and cold and dizzy. She tried to collect her wits, but Wayne Thomas's editorial kept running through her mind. Help on interviews — personally knowing people — less qualified. She saw Hank sitting on the throne she'd built for him — and he fell clattering across the floor and broke into little pieces. She wanted to put her head into her hands and cry, like a little girl.

She began walking down the hall, down the stairs. What an awful interview! Hank can't *possibly* give me the job now! She wanted it more than ever. She wanted desperately to believe in him, to be proud of him.

Somehow she got through the Commons, but she'd been unaware of it. She was out in the night. The stars and the spring wind were all around her.

What a mess! Her heels clicked on the pavement. The words haunted her. Across the street, up the hill, in the the side door, up the stairs and into the bright, cluttered room. She longed for Hank's arms around her, his deep voice telling her, "It's o.k., Annie," like the time she'd gotten the poster order wrong and had printed a hundred posters before she caught it. She had cried then, and Hank had said "It's o.k., Annie," and it was.

"Annie, how'd you do? Didja get the job?" Julie pounced on her.

"I won't know." Anne shut her eyes. She flopped in the direction of the bed, sprawling across it. Julie stared helplessly.

Things began to clear a little. Hank just couldn't give her the job now. Maybe, maybe it was better that way. Jan had wanted it, was experienced, had worked hard getting her interview ready. She herself had worked for Hank enough. She was still his pinmate. And now — this editorial — Somehow he'd always taken care of her, seen she had a job — like an insurance policy.

Why! That's what Hank was, an insurance policy! Stick with him and you'd have a job. Help him get glory and he'd let a little seep through to you. Hank Schaller was going to the top. Help him get there and he'd give you a boost too. And no one knew! Hank blinded them all with his spell! Wayne Thomas's editorial was about Hank — her Hank!

A lump filled her throat, making it ache.

She thought of Buz Flynn — a faithful Schaller follower. Now he was Publicity Chairman. Why! So far, most of Hank's Central Committee was his old Prom Committee.

"Anne Brandenburg! Annie!"

Anne opened her eyes.

"Anne Brandenburg!"

"Yes," automatically.

"Phone, line two." A head popped in the door. "Hurry it up, will you? It sounds like Hank Schaller."

"Oh, Annie," Julie squealed, "I just know you got it!"

Anne hardly dared breathe. She picked up the receiver stiffly.

"Hello. This is Anne —"

"Annie," Hank broke in, "get applications for committee positions in the *'Daily'* tomorrow. If you speed it up, you can still make the deadline. Who are you going to have on your committee? Do you want me to call them and tell them to get their applications in?"

"I-I hadn't decided, Hank."

"Annie! Why not? Do you want to wait and have to pick from the ones that come in?"

"Well — I guess so."

"O.k., but you're apt to not get a good committee. It

leaves it up to chance. — You'll be at Central Committee meeting Thursday night?"

"Hank —"

"Yeah?"

"Did — did I get the job?"

She waited, hoping, he'd say no. The editorial flashed before her like a neon sign.

"Why — sure, Annie. Why not? I said you'd have it, didn't I?" He sounded hurt.

"Well," she said at last, "I just wondered. I gave an awful interview." She laughed tensely.

"It wasn't what I've seen you do. I had to talk pretty fast to Wayne. He was sold on Jan Harding's interview. But I'd worked with her and she didn't hold up."

"Hank, you know she's good."

"But she's not on to my system. Senior Honors elects members next month. I have to be careful. You'll do a good job, Annie. I know you will."

"Thanks, Hank. I'll call the *Daily*."

"Swell, Annie. I'll pick you up for Central Committee."

"Bye, Hank."

She set the receiver down and sat looking at it blankly. I could call him right back and decline the position, she thought, just tell him I don't want a job that's so — obviously — fixed. She recoiled at the word. It sounded evil and foreign with Hank's name. I could explain that it's better for him. Wayne Thomas couldn't say anymore about him.

But Hank wouldn't listen. She knew that. He was on his way to the top and nothing was going to stop him. "I knew I could count on you, Annie." It was that spell! It held everyone. Everyone — but her. She was going to escape.

She undid Hank's pin and balanced it in her hand, staring at it. Her hands were damp and cold around the burning metal. Her thumbnail stole to her lips and she nibbled at it.

She braced herself and dialed Hank's number.

—Mary Jean Stoddard, *H. Ec.*, '56

